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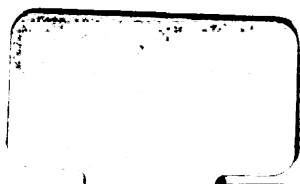
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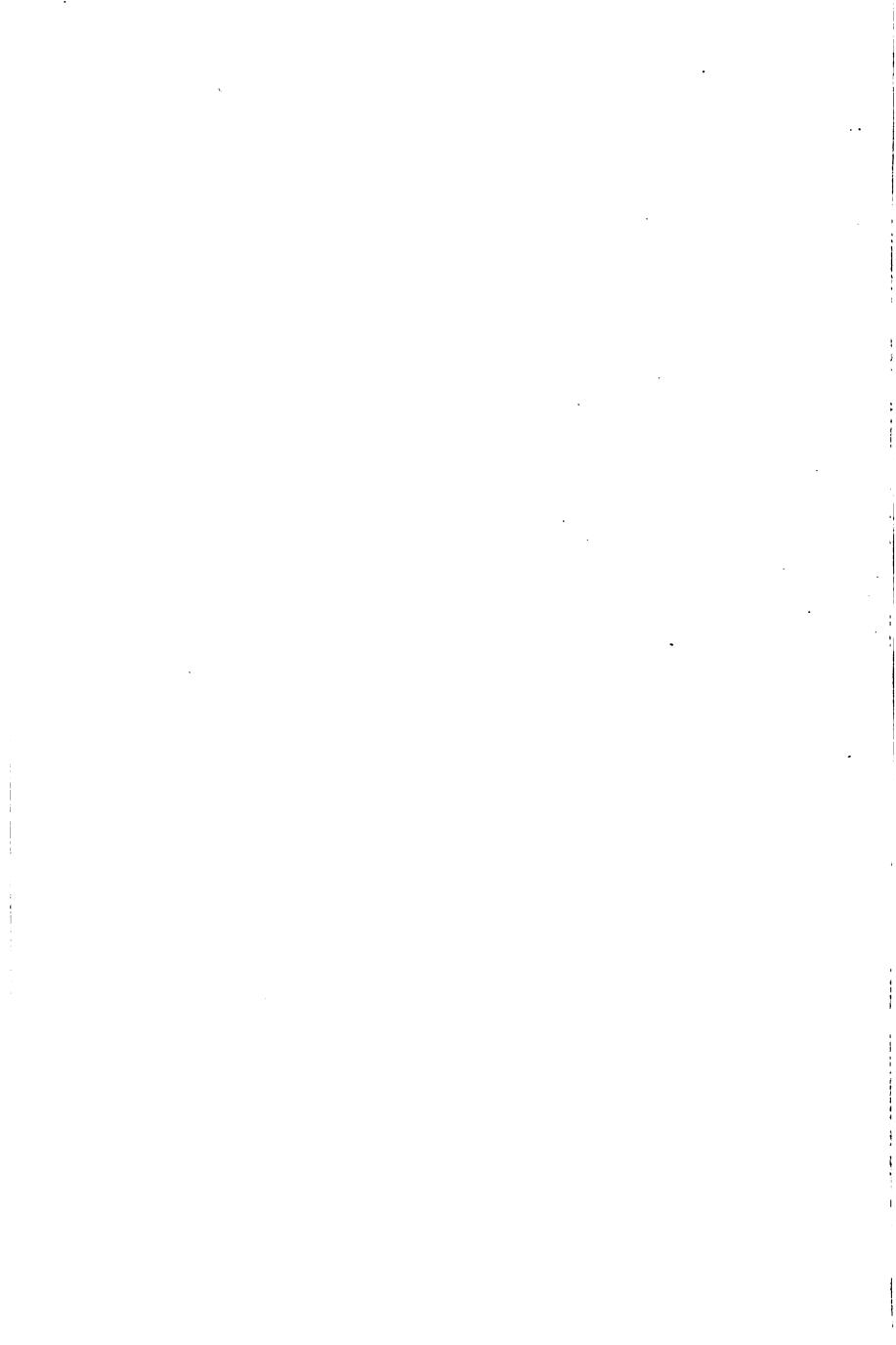
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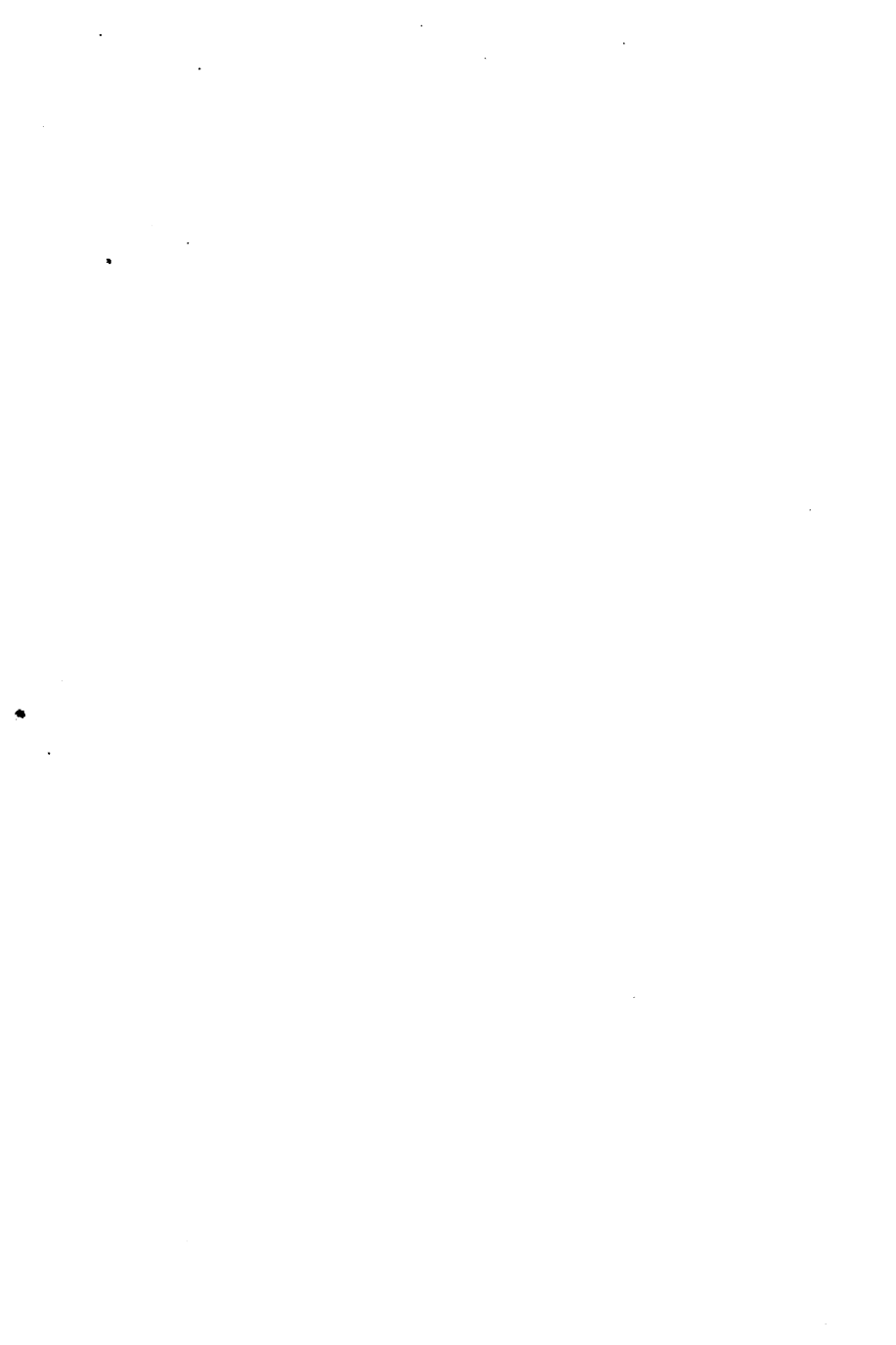
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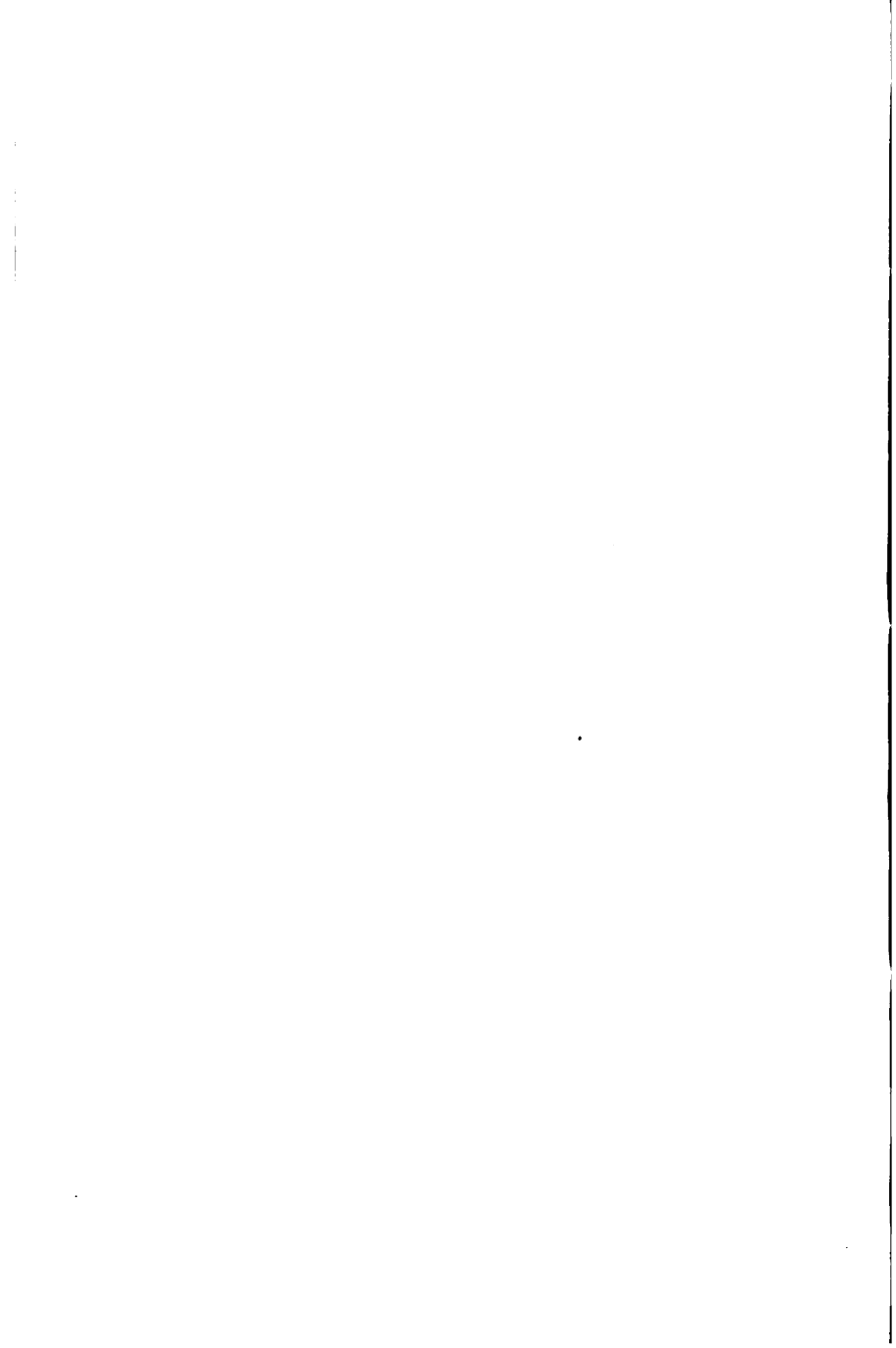




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# Cobblestones



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# Cobblestones

## A Book of Poems

by  
David Sentner

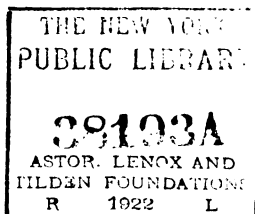
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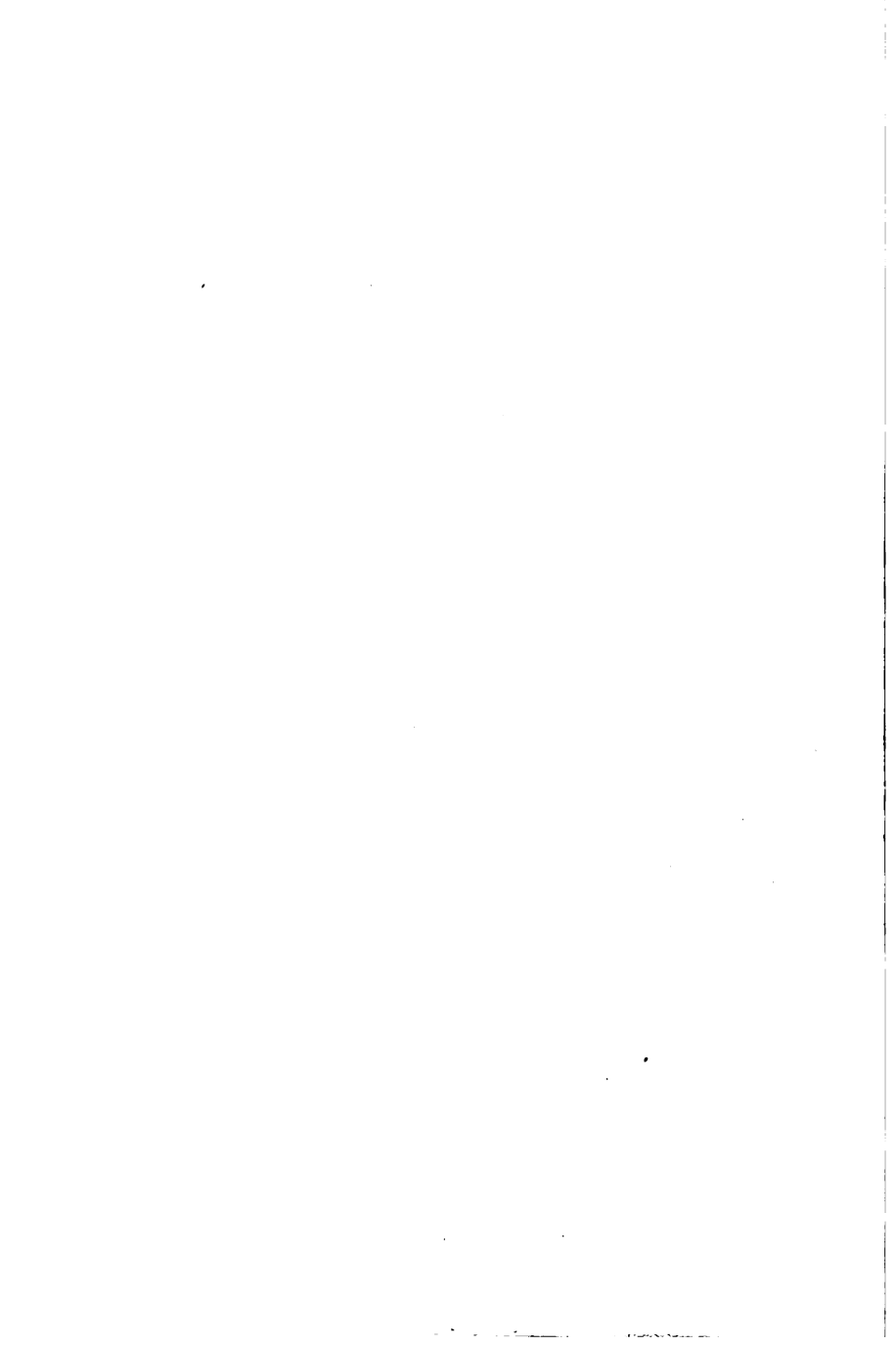
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Inscribed  
to  
Mary Southerland Steele

22/11/22  
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# The Valley of Lost Steps

I stood nigh the Valley of Steps That Are Lost  
And listened to echoes that come and go  
Like breezes thru the fingers of the trees.

The tiny step of a toddling child  
Who knew not the path ahead;  
The jerky beat of a vigorous youth  
Who hustled toward quick success;  
The clump and thump of an army boot  
Which tramped the long, long one-way road  
To the parapet in France;  
The clodding plod of a routine man  
Who followed the rut of environment;  
The mincing patter of debutante  
Down the Aisle of Life  
With its rosy hedges;  
The weary, dreary shuffle of woman  
Who trudged the sands of a household wilderness.

But as they neared the Valley of Lost Steps  
Their cadences were joined  
In one vast symphony



As if it were but one  
And only one  
Who trod in dignity deliberate  
Toward the Valley where bare feet  
Dance noiselessly on velvet grass.

# The Bricklayer

I have been laying bricks  
Each upon its brother  
For days and months and years  
And it is irksome  
As sifting the ashes of Hell.

I remember when I was a child  
I played with colored blocks  
Untiringly  
And found it good.

## Aristocracy

An oyster in an oyster-bed  
Where every oyster held a pearl  
Swallowed a diamond.  
He bragged about his wealth  
Spouting at his fellows  
Who could boast only of pearl.  
But there came a day  
When he was scooped up  
Pried apart and robbed  
Of both his diamond and his pearl,  
Then scornfully thrown back  
Into the muddy depth,  
Maimed and mangled.  
Yet this proud oyster  
Became King of the Oysters.  
For was it not distinction  
To be pearlless  
In a colony  
Of pearl-oysters?

## Mrs. Potts Ascends

Mrs. Potts the Social Climber  
Dreamed she made ascent to Heaven  
Broke into the Inner Circle  
Gave a party to the Angels  
All the Notables attended.

Decked in halo made of moonbeams  
Wore her wings of solid star-dust  
Streaked with sky and rosy sunset  
Even God remarked with fervour,  
"Mrs. Potts, you look superb."

# I Have a Rendezvous with Life

I have a rendezvous with Life  
That travels fast as shooting star  
And stops the tick of clock.

I have a rendezvous with Life  
Within a cluttered city,  
Where ragged elbows  
Rub with elbows of fine texture,  
Where hearts beat high and low  
With joy and sorrow,  
Where everybody counts and counts.

I have a rendezvous with Life  
Within a drawing room,  
Where tinkle teacups and small talk,  
Where bosoms are half-naked  
And souls are fully veiled,  
Where teeth are bared in sweetest smile,  
Where fox is sheep and sheep is fox,  
Beneath the glistening crystal lights.

I have a rendezvous with Life  
Within a whirring factory,  
Where machines run men,  
Where toys and delicacies  
Are flavored with sweat and toil,  
Where brawn is built and brain is numbed.

I have a rendezvous with Life  
Within a lonely farmhouse,  
Where the breeze is clean  
And men and grain attain full growth,  
Where God is on four sides and by the hearth,  
Where women gossip openly  
And help each other at harvest time  
No matter what space of sky  
There be between each farm.

## Tree in a Canyon

I love to walk  
Through a certain city canyon  
Flanked by cliffs of dwellings drab  
Where grows a tree  
On the outer sidewalk.

I do not know the name of the tree  
For I am city-bred.

# The Death of Pan

On excellent authority  
I've heard of how Pan died.

It seems that walking in his sleep  
His Majesty awoke  
To find himself  
Upon a Subway station.  
He joined the dance  
Thinking it was some frolicking  
Of city satyrs.



## Life of a City

Numbers and prices of things—  
Babies and married couples—  
Old ladies and sometimes old men—  
Churches, lodging houses, theatres,  
Slums and places to eat—  
The waiting for the man one step ahead  
To drop dead.

Underneath it all  
A series of glows and hurts  
And equilibriums  
That only the person knows  
But never shows completely.

# The Devil Visits Broadway

In tattered garb of beggar came the Devil  
To scorch the blackish mark upon the soul  
Of mortals in the City of Cold Hearts.

And as he walked the ill-famed street,  
A ragged urchin offered him  
His only crust of bread.

In rage the Devil melted back to Hell.

## A Lilt

I grasped the greasy subway strap  
And read the lurid advertisements  
I chewed my gum voraciously  
Inhaled strange fumes pugnaciously.  
I heard the grating of the wheels  
And felt that the chords  
Of my city soul  
Were in perfect tune.

# A Rumbling

I thought I heard the World  
Creaking and groaning on its axis.  
I looked out from my window  
And saw a lusty steamroller  
Rattling slowly on its way  
Towards the destination  
Which it was sure to reach  
In due time.

# A Thought

Like a brilliant Thought  
That rises from its fellows  
A bright toy-balloon  
Broke from a cluster.

Lifted by a breeze  
It soared above white dwellings  
To sink into a dingy alley.

A grimy child  
Aglow at the beauty of its roundness  
Greedyly grasped the balloon  
And pressed it to his narrow chest.

A vagrant pin  
Pierced the rubber bubble  
But the child kept the remnant  
Prizing it for its color.

# Day of Judgment

The next day was to be  
The Day of Judgment  
And plans were made  
For a monstrous brass band.  
The papers teemed  
With the controversy being waged  
As to which churchman would make  
The welcoming address  
To the great Jehovah.

The people of the slums  
Were also excited  
And ate an extra piece  
Of bread for supper.

## Two Voices

A famous singer lay  
At the portal of Death.  
Bulletins issued hourly  
By a staff of specialists  
Were read by an anxious world  
Shocked at the thought  
Of losing their beloved song-bird—  
And the price of his  
Phonograph records rose.

At the lower end of the city  
In a murky room  
A foreign woman moaned alone  
Over her little boy that was—  
“Never no more shall I hear  
My dear bambino’s voice.”

# The Subway Guard

Pasty-faced and weary-eyed  
He sealed the coach  
With load of human cattle.

I shouted him, "What station next?"  
But twinkling thought inquired me,  
"What was he the Life Before?"

He howled me the station's name  
But my sub-conscious ear received,  
"I was an eagle."



## Blasphemy

Overhead the shamefaced stars  
Softly scan the street below  
Where the shops in splendour sparkle,  
Where the signs of theatres dazzle,  
As along the gleaming highway  
Head-lights come and tail-lights go.

Timidly the Dawn creeps in  
And the blasphemed Sun mounts high  
Beating vainly on the windows  
Of tall buildings where the workers  
'Count the debits and the credits  
Under lamps with greenish shades.

# Neighbors

For years I have lived  
In an edifice of stone  
But never met my neighbor;  
Yet we may lie  
Side by side  
Forever.

# Geographically Speaking

## NORTH—

There are as many baby-carriages  
Along St. Nicholas Avenue  
As there are automobiles  
Upon Fifth Avenue.

## SOUTH—

Ferries, commuters, shrieks from peanut-stands,  
And the breezes from the Bay—  
Where one can stand on the Battery wall  
And see the Statue and bigger things.

## EAST—

At the lower end,  
Scarcely enough room to live decently;  
At the upper end,  
Too much room to live democratically.

## WEST—

Giving birth to the "Upper West Side,"  
Which covers a multitude of rents;  
Far below is Greenwich Village,

The aromatic section of Sixth Avenue ware-  
houses,  
And the financial district  
With its nation-wide tentacles.

A New Yorker is like a chameleon  
Camping upon a piece of plaid.

## Unto the End

Twenty-four hours to live  
As the end of the world is proclaimed.

The millionaire scatters his gold—  
The lawyer opens the jails—  
The minister goes to a dance—  
The atheist starts in to pray—  
While the Poet keeps on trading—trading—  
Old dreams for new.

## Closing the Grill

Crystal chandeliers out-gleaming the stars—  
Soft pink shades casting a mellow light—  
Napery, white as snow on a roof—  
Chinaware, dainty as a baby's birthday ring.

Sleek-haired men with females  
Of silks, satins and cosmetics  
Patter correctly over the parquet floor  
Through the mirrored doorway.

Waiters' imitation shirt-bosoms are displaced  
As tables are stripped  
Exposing the pine wood  
Topped by burlap.

# Wall Street

A whirling dervish  
In the center  
Of a moving merry-go-round  
About which vast crowds mill  
While the world  
Twirls upon its axis.

## **'The Web of Life**

Life in a dug-out is a gray monotony  
And trifles grow to great importance.  
One night we spied a spider  
Centered in his flimsy, fine-spun web.  
"Oh let the poor dumb devil be," one lad put in.  
"Let's clean him out and wipe the web,"  
Another doughboy said.  
"And if we do, he'll only spin again;"  
At which I deftly dealt a blow  
With army mitten  
That sent the bug  
Into the Big Beyond of Insects.  
Next dawn a leaden load  
Wiped out our dirty dug-out  
Which we were forced to build again.



## Out of the Line.

Wild growths of beard—  
Uniforms in shreds—  
Shoes clotted with gobs of mud.

Eyes droop wearily,  
Suddenly blink hysterically,  
And then are set in a stare,  
As if we saw the horrible thing  
All over again.

Lines that would take Nature  
Years to produce,  
Seam the region  
About the forehead, eyes and mouth.

Men who have received the highest culture  
That civilization can give,  
Wear a snarling, savage, demented expression.

Is it over?  
How is it we live?  
And all the gang?  
So many faces are missing.  
So cold—yet just from Hell.

## Khaki and Gold

Upon an upland region of fair France  
A field of gold and khaki lay outspread.  
Clusters of pure unassuming daisies—  
Each flower matched by tawny tunic'd youth.  
And as they sprawled upon the dewy grass  
The signal softly came for "jumping off."  
All eagerly the lads sprang to their feet;  
There came a lull to harmonize the line.  
A lean and dour Yank stooped low and plucked  
A handful of sweet daisies from their home,  
And thrust them in the muzzle of his gun  
And garlanded his helmet with some more,  
Inspiring his buddies to the same.  
"Let's give 'em daisies!" rasped an Easterner.  
"And Hell!" roared out a boy from the far West.  
A long, lithe line swept o'er the open field  
To music of the thunderous barrage;  
And every here and there a gap was shown  
With daisy showers as the lads plunged down.  
What scattering of gold and mud and blood!  
Quite limp these blessed flowers strewed the  
ground.  
Where but before the wind and sun had made

Them palpitate in youthful joy of life,  
Now they lay quiet in eternal sleep.  
With petals stripped from off their graceful stems  
Yet there they seemed to rest in peace upon  
The ground from which the enemy had fled.

## The Citation

Hungry as a Hun  
And nervous as a tent  
Taut in the wind  
The doughboy stood  
While a medal  
Was pinned upon his breast.  
Feeling a speech required  
He mumbled:  
"You can't eat it  
"And you can't smoke it."  
Not understanding English  
As we Americans speak it  
The French officer said;  
"Thus are brave soldiers  
Rewarded!"

# Economics

In France  
They fed the horses daily  
While at times we doughboys starved.

In the factory  
We were taught the value  
Of machinery  
And how inefficient it was  
To get mangled.

I wonder if in Hell  
They'll tell us  
To be careful of the coal.

# Taps

(An accompaniment)

Soldier's sweet—song of sleep—  
Long he'll lie with this last lullabye—  
Sound the notes—strong and pure—  
So they soar with his soul to the sky—

## Logs

Two logs met in a fire-place;  
Each fell in love at first touch.  
"Will you lean on me forever?"  
Said the hard cedar wood.  
"Nothing shall part us!"  
Swore the soft pine wood.  
And their flame of love  
Ascended as they kissed.  
But soon the fire dwindled unto ashes  
And their love lay cold upon the hearth.

## A Blue Law

One time in Bolshevikia  
There was a dreadful drop  
In church attendance.  
So a law was passed  
Charging exorbitant prices  
For pew reservations.  
From then on  
The temples were thronged  
And people boasted  
Of their frequent trips  
To church.



## Among the Ravine

Tripping lightly along  
The narrow, rocky ravine  
That leads up to Success,  
Love spied Gold  
Plodding sternly ahead.  
She tried to pass  
And then a struggle followed.  
The glint in the eyes of Gold  
Bothered Love—  
So she was overcome.

# The Revelation

In the blessed Beyond  
The Soul of a husband  
Met the Soul of his wife  
And said,  
"I never knew you were so beautiful."

## A Mother

She nursed him—  
She taught him—  
She worked for him—  
She visited him in prison.  
But he had broken both  
The law of God and man  
And died for it.  
She cried for him—  
Then went to church for him.

# Woman

A super scientist placed  
In his crucible  
Vanity and Virtue  
Mixed with Temperance  
Hoping to produce  
A woman.

Many, many times he tried  
But failed and finally  
Gave up in deep despair.  
Success awaited him  
If he had thought  
Of dropping in a grain  
Of Love.

## A Rose

Beneath the sun's caresses  
Bloomed the rose  
Until 'twas plucked and kissed  
By one whose red, red lips  
Shamed the rose into a bloodless lily.

From amorous embrace that night  
The rose was crushed to death.

## The Hobo and the Dream Child

In a box-car on a siding  
Sat the hobo  
Cuddling a puny fire  
Made from straw.  
The Dream Child toddled up  
In shivering rags and said:  
"I cannot find a shelter."  
The hobo wrapped it  
In a burlap bag  
And bade it curl  
Beside the smoky flame,  
Feeding the blaze  
With the remaining straw  
Which formed his bed.  
The Dream Child told him  
Of its coming from  
A place in which the gold  
Was plentiful as water  
And gushed through iron pipes  
For use by all  
Who loved its beauty.  
The hobo packed the Dream Child off

On a rumbling fast freight  
Bound for its distant country.  
He went back to the ashes  
Of his straw fire and wondered  
Why there wasn't straw enough in the world  
For everybody's fire.

## As Seen from the Stars

It was in the School of the Stars  
Where all the little bright ones  
Were learning psychology from a scholar.  
"Instinctive actions are displayed,"  
Said the High-Light,  
"In their purest form  
By animals not very high  
In the scale of intelligence.  
Among the mortals  
The men become blind and deaf  
To all other impressions  
As they follow the trail of gold."



## The Ritual

When he was baptized—  
Red-faced and sticky  
As a ball of candy  
They said:  
“Doesn’t he look lovely.”

When he was married—  
His evening coat askew  
And nervous as a flea  
They said:  
“Doesn’t he look lovely.”

When he lay in his casket—  
Pale and wasted  
Like a washed-out painting  
They said:  
“Doesn’t he look lovely.”

## Three Wishes

If I had three wishes to use  
To shave the world of its sharp edges,  
First, I would wish  
That everyone had a sense of humor—  
And secondly I'd wish  
That my first wish would bear good fruit;  
And with my last  
I'd wish for three more wishes  
So to wish what I had wished before—  
All over again.  
And thus I'd wish my life away  
And die in laughter.

## The Weather

He felt that the Sun  
Was a glorious flame  
And the Air that he breathed  
Was exquisite perfume  
And Life was very good after all;  
So he said to his friend,  
"Isn't it a nice day?"

## **\* The Arch-Murderer**

An arch-murderer slit the throat  
Of every lawyer.  
When brought before the bar  
He pleaded his own case  
And drew a sentence  
Of thirty days in jail.

## A Silly Lad

"Cause everybody loves and smiles  
"And gives at Christmas time  
"Why cannot every day be Christmas, Dad?"

"Because a man must work and fight  
"To earn a lot of money  
"For next Christmas, Son."

"Well, if a man stopped  
"Making lots of money  
"Wouldn't every day be Christmas?"

"Now, don't be silly, little man,  
"When you grow up you'll understand  
"Why every day cannot be Christmas."

## The Cynic

"There is no God  
"There is no Love  
"And man is made of clay."  
The youthful Cynic  
Spoke and smiled  
Like a garden of golden sunbeams.  
And then I knew  
He was no Cynic.

## On the Train

I saw an oak  
Sturdy and strong  
And said to myself,  
"Ah! that is man!"  
I glimpsed a bird flying  
Swift and sure  
And thought again of man.  
My brother commuter  
Turned to me and said;  
"Hope the train's on time;  
I've been late so much  
The last few days  
I'm ashamed to look the boss in the face."

# Evolution

A fashionable man  
Loved a maiden of a land  
Quite uncivilized.

He made the maid his wife  
And he taught her all the life  
That was civilized.

In a very little while  
She adopted all the style  
That was civilized.

From the diamonds on her ears  
Or the brooch upon her breast  
And the load of heavy rings—  
No one ever could have guessed  
That once she was  
Uncivilized.



# Philosophy

I sat a siege  
With a group of philosophers  
And at the finish  
Realized  
How practical a person  
A savage is.

## A Cynogram

The unknown Weaver works  
A warp of joy  
And woof of sorrow.  
At different times it is  
A radiant rainbow,  
A Scotch plaid,  
Or a block of sombre black.  
This Cloth of Life  
Contains few strands  
That we, ourselves, insert;  
Yet we must wear it.

# Growing-Pains

To reach the prime  
Of Eternity  
Life's children all must suffer  
Growing-pains  
Which we call  
Death.

## Sanctuary

In a temple of worship  
I sat and waited for the ceremony  
Of brotherhood to begin.  
A lumbering ox of a person  
In entering the pew  
Settled his foot upon my own.  
If it had not been the House of the Lord  
I would have killed the lout.

# The Man Who Lived in Jail

Ninety miles south of the Rio Grande  
Lies Santa Natalia  
Past the waste of mesquite and nopal  
Tucked in the valley of Las Huitlacoques  
With its charm of sunny, restful remoteness.  
The stress and scuffle of Anglo-Saxon America  
Seems like a dream of another world  
As one yields to the carefree atmosphere  
Of the land of yesterday  
And the to-morrow that never comes.

The inhabitants of this tiny, lonely oasis  
Are a kindly, simple folk,  
Unspoiled by commercialism  
And untouched by the ebb and flow  
Of Mexico's recurrent civil wars.  
There is a wealth of pasturage  
For their cattle, sheep and goats,  
And a fertile soil that yields  
Rich crops of corn and sugar cane.

The government is the comandante  
And a somnolent garrison of perhaps a dozen  
soldiers

Whose arms are single-shot Remingtons  
And relic Mausers from the Spanish-American  
war.

Enemy parties of guerrillas  
Leave them amiably indifferent;  
They are quite as willing to shout "viva"  
For one side as for the other.

I learned there was but one soul in the hamlet  
Who spoke English—  
And he was in jail.

I strolled down the ragged trail  
And came to an adobe building  
Somewhat larger than the ordinary dwelling,  
In the shade of which was sprawled  
A motley group of soldiers;  
I asked one the location of the jail.

"You are looking at it, brother,"  
Said he in excellent American.

"Are you from the States?" I asked,  
Puzzled over his swarthy complexion.  
"I am half Mexican, born in Santa Natalia;  
I have lived some years in New York;  
I am here because I wish to be."

He was not over thirty-five  
But his eyes showed centuries of something;  
Slender, and with the fingers of a pianist,  
He was not of the adventurer type.  
His face seemed strangely familiar  
And I felt that I had met him  
Somewhere in the past.

"Are you the warden?"

"No," he answered after a thoughtful pause;  
"I am the star prisoner;  
After New York was through with me  
I came to Santa Natalia;  
One night I was drinking in the cantina  
And had a row with a man  
Who was something in the government.  
They put me in here and forgot about me;  
That was two years ago.

"I have it very easy;  
There is nothing to do  
But eat, sleep, and enjoy myself.  
When I want a little paseo,  
They give me a guard to take me out;  
I drift around the town  
And people give me  
All the eats and cigarettes I need.

The comandante and the priest  
Get books for me to read.

"Sometimes when I am lucky with the dice  
We put on a little show at the cantina;  
Then they send another guard  
To bring us both back home.  
Nobody cares, because what is the use?"

Manuel, he was called,  
Insisting that he had forgotten  
His last name.

After the strife and turmoil of New York  
This passive village soothed the ragged nerves.  
I could understand Manuel—  
In Mexico there is no to-morrow.

One morning I idly watched a burro  
Who roused himself occasionally  
To nibble at the mesquite leaves.  
Sleepy chickens taking a sun and dust bath,  
Expressed their contentment by faint croonings.  
Two children naively unaware of their nakedness,  
Played in the shade, building little sand houses,  
And trying to entice a dog to play with them;  
Finally they tired of play  
And stretched out to sleep beside their dog.



The hotel-front was a cascade  
Of creeping vines and flowers.  
There was no sign of life  
Save the fluttering of brilliant butterflies,  
The whirring of a hummingbird,  
And the drowsy droning of a bumblebee.

Over the dull, twisting trail of yellow,  
A distant cloud of dust arose.  
"Best come inside, Senor.  
I do not know who is coming. It may be . . ."  
The voice of Trujillo, the inn-keeper,  
Melted into his heavy breathing.  
I entered;  
The entire family was within  
And my host was barring the heavy door.  
The windows with their cemented iron bars  
Threw shadows around the room.

In the distance sounded a crisp crackling;  
From the juzgado  
Came the sharp, biting reports of Mausers  
And heavier punctuations of old Remingtons  
In a lively fusillade.  
The firing increased in volume  
And then it suddenly ceased.  
I heard an outbreak of falsetto Indian yells;  
A Trujillo youngster peering from the window

Called to his father that the garrison had  
surrendered.

Outside, the victors were riding  
Toward the fallen fortress.  
They were a fierce-faced group of thirty.  
What they lacked in uniformity of dress,  
They made up in variety of weapons.  
The color-bearer was an Indian girl  
With eyes that pranced  
Like a pair of jet black steeds.

The comandante and the guerrilla chief  
Bartered bows and compliments.  
The latter made a grandiloquent address  
Filled with such words as "patriotism"  
And "honor" and "civilization"  
In which he granted amnesty complete  
To all of Santa Natalia.  
The garrison promptly swore allegiance  
To the new government  
And the comandante philosophically  
Went home for his afternoon siesta.

A few evenings afterward  
I listened to the unexcited gossip  
In the Café of the Little Drop of Water.

In stumbled Manuel as tipsy as a top,  
With desperate eyes and lips compressed;  
Thrusting his head upon his folded arms,  
He wore the sign of dull despondency.

"Homēsick?" I soothingly said.

"Homeless is a better word," he huskily replied.

"Where is your guard?"

"No more guard—no more jail," he sadly said.

"Garcia, the head of the new government

A few days back told me that I was free;

He wanted me to be the comandante.

I begged him to inform me of my crime,

That he should make me leave my jail.

He waved his arms and swore

That never would he confine

One of the country's patriots."

"Were you so fond of the carcel?"

He wanly smiled and with a supercilious touch

As the sky might look at a grain of sand.

"What more could a man desire?

All sorts of leisure and no responsibility—

No pleasure-loving woman

To turn a man into a routine rat;  
Nor is there any subway  
To crush the soul of a man  
Into a paltry pellet."

I said encouragingly:  
"Where there's a will there's a jail."

"I've been drunk as a duck," he said,  
"And nobody will notice me.  
I have picked a fight with many  
But not one gave me a chance to shoot."  
He sighed and then continued:  
"Last evening, I flirted  
With the standard bearer of Garcia  
And induced her to run away with me.  
Hiding her in a cabin deep in the mountains,  
I despatched a messenger to Garcia  
Telling him of what I had done.  
He sent back word  
That he was eternally obliged  
As he had tried for long  
To rid himself of her.  
The girl is now in love with me  
And wants to work for Manuel  
And says she would be happy  
If I will beat her daily."

"You do not wish to own her?"  
I could not forget  
The Indian girl with eyes like prancing blacks.

He had time to look far back into the past.  
With his sombre brown eyes before he answered.  
"A man can have a woman or happiness—  
But not both."

Days later came the news  
That a bold bandit had robbed the paymaster  
Of the Sierra Mining Company.  
The native officials were full of promises  
For the capture of the robber;  
Privately they yawned.  
Two troopers from the mining village  
Eventually wandered over;  
They visited the garrison,  
Smoked 'corn-shuck cigarettes,  
Chatted and flirted with the senoritas;  
Bye and bye they jogged unhurriedly away.

Manuel told me all about it.  
He was in lofty spirits;  
Not so drunk as usual  
And with a hopeful countenance,  
He sprawled upon a chair,  
Slowly puffing a cigarette.

"When the paymaster's hand went to his hip,  
I almost dropped my Colt and fled into the cactus;  
He pulled out a roll of bills  
As thick as a burro's belly.  
I told him I was Manuel  
From Santa Natalia.  
It should be only a question of time  
When I will be back in my cozy jail."

A week passed, which in Mexico  
Is as long or as short as you care to make it.  
There was no further sign  
Of any official interest in the robbery.  
Manuel was getting nervous;  
He boldly boasted of the hold-up.  
His listeners would laugh good-naturedly,  
Not raising their eyes from the dominoes.

I prepared to leave for Vera Cruz  
And catch a vessel back  
To the City of Worry and Scurry  
As Manuel called New York.

He heard of my preparations  
And came to see me.  
"Leaving?" he slowly said.

"If you would care to go North with me,  
I could use you, Manuel;

And I promise to provide you  
With plenty paseo."

Manuel shook his head decisively  
And faster smoked his corn-shuck cigarette.  
He dug into his faded muddy tunic  
Bringing forth a musty bag.  
"Here is the result of the hold-up.  
It is only money—  
But there is a reward for its return.  
If I brought it myself to the Justice  
The company would never receive it  
And I would probably be murdered  
For knowing too much."

I did not understand and told him so.

"The mining company is Americano;  
You tell the superintendent  
I am the bandit;  
Tell him that I will surrender;  
Then see the comandante and let him know  
He may obtain the reward  
If he but sentence me."

"Why not skip away with the money  
And make yourself comfortable?"

His features hardened as he said;  
"I did that once,—never again;  
Once I was prisoner and slave  
To a woman when I was free;  
Back in jail all that was past and done with;  
I was free from worry  
And had only to pass each day  
Dreaming and smoking in the shade."

I was struck with a flash of memory.  
"Weren't you the teller in the Times Square  
National?"

"It was so," he confessed.  
"Sing Sing spilled me out two years ago;  
The woman got it all  
And went away with another,  
So I came here and made myself a home."

. . . That evening I brought the soldiers  
To make the arrest.

A few days later for the last time  
I rode out of Santa Natalia.  
Before the jail  
Manuel was stretched in the shade  
With the soldiers of the garrison,  
More one of them than prisoner.



"Look me up in New York some time," I greeted.

"Never again New York for me," he said.

"I am going to be here  
Until the next revolution—  
Then I will break into jail again."

"Any message for the City  
Of Hustle and Bustle?"  
I bantered.

"You might tell that poor fool  
Who married my woman  
That I feel great sorrow for him."

A soldier spoke in Spanish to Manuel;  
He rose and said to me:  
"It is time to go for our paseo.  
We will go to the cantina  
And Juan will give us pulque;  
Then we shall visit Garcia  
And go around to our other friends  
For enchiladas and café  
And a little chat.  
Goodbye!"

# Tracks

With a boat for oxen  
A youth plowed the sea  
Until his beard was white  
As the fringe of the waves;  
But always would his furrows  
Vanish as quickly as they came.

People would say,  
"You fool!  
You have wasted your life  
In doing nothing."

But he would smile and reply,  
"No one can make tracks in the sea  
Exactly like mine."

## The Surf

The waves are ardent lovers  
Wooing a sweetheart  
With tumultuous kisses;  
When she rebuffs  
They storm with unrelenting fury  
Until she gives herself completely.

# Efficiency

America counted its coins  
With an efficiency  
That made the clink reverberate  
Across the ocean.

When the flower of Europe's youth  
Became a forest of bayonets,  
And the rattle of Death  
Rolled over the seas,  
We stopped our counting for an instant,  
Shrugged our shoulders,  
And thumbed our coins more feverishly.

And then we saw strange spots upon the gold . . .  
We poured the blood into the scales  
And balanced it with sunbeams.

Sunbeams are the Ideals of Nature;  
They are fickle things and hard to grasp,  
Yet give a happy warmth.

America counted its cartridges  
With an efficiency

That made the world reverberate  
With wonder.

The sunbeams from a newborn Sun  
Tipped the bloody scales of Justice.

America is counting coins again  
With an efficiency  
That makes the clink reverberate  
Across the ocean.

The sunbeams mingle now and then  
With the glint of golden metal:  
We shall count with greater speed  
If we but draw the shade:  
Sunbeams are good for the soul  
But hard on the eye.

## Balance

A certain hod-carrier  
For every load of bricks  
Would bear a hod of horseshoes  
On the other shoulder.  
At the top of the ladder  
He'd cast the horseshoes  
To the ground below  
And descend with his pair of hods  
Balanced with equal emptiness . . .

Rhymes at times  
Are like that.

## Usage

I gave some money to a rich man  
And he put it in his bank;  
I gave some money to a tattered beggar  
And he bought more rags for his back.

# Headings

Newsboys seldom read below the headlines:  
Tombstones reach no further than the grass.



## Gifts

The stars offered a choice of gifts—  
A jewel, a tree, or a pretty child.

"I'll take the jewel," said the farmer,  
"For it will shine forever  
And there are many trees and children  
But few priceless stones in the world."

"I'll take the tree," said the city man,  
"To plant before my door and give me shade;  
It will grow like a pretty child  
And yet not show ingratitude."

"We'll take the child,"  
Said the lonely pair;  
"For it will make one of three  
Where two made nothing before."

## Intelligence

When the ancients planned a voyage o'er the seas  
They consulted the oracle at Delphi . . .

Mrs. Fitz lifted the receiver:

"Hello, is this the Weather Bureau?

We are planning a picnic for the orphans;

Tell me, if you please,

What sort of day next Saturday will be?"

## Sky in a City

The business man striking his monthly balance  
Looked through his office window—  
The sky is a bank  
And the stars are its fortune.

The poet on the roof of his boarding house—  
The sky is a garden of phosphorescent flowers.

Sitting on a park bench with her gentleman friend,  
Mamie said:  
“Look at the bunch of stars in the sky.  
Ain’t it awful pretty!”

## ✱The Pervert

He walked home from the office  
Through the park  
And was seized with a perversion.  
He buried his face deep  
In the buds of a rose-bush  
Inhaling the fragrance with rapture.  
Quickly he recovered himself  
And glanced around covertly.

A short distance away  
A scowling policeman  
Twirled his club threateningly.

## The Tattler

As the city's white day  
Shades into the mauve twilight  
A swallow skims across the cornice  
Of my cage.

Perhaps he is a woodland scout  
Hastening back with the news  
That another tree has been planted  
Upon the edge of our pavement.  
How the leaves in the forest this night  
Will rustle with gossip!

## Tactics

"Suppose I am behind?  
Do I spend it on myself?  
I haven't a saucer in the house  
And the kids—your kids—  
The toes are sticking thru their shoes!  
If I don't get ten dollars  
You'll get no supper to-night!"  
Screams Jane.

"Where do I get the money?  
Can I grind it out like a sausage machine?  
It's ten for this and ten for that  
And now another ten.  
Damn it! You'll make me a thief.  
Here's five; that's all I got!"  
John roars.

Jane snatches as John stalks out  
Slamming the door behind him.

On his way to the station John chuckles,  
"Fooled the old lady out of five."  
Foxy boy that John.

Across the dumbwaiter  
Jane boasts to Mrs. Shultz  
How she wheedled five from John  
When she only needed three.

## Birdlings

An out-of-town swallow culling crumbs  
From urban cobble-stones—  
A sophisticated sparrow pecking worms  
Off a luscious landscape.

A country girl with wistful eyes  
Before a shop of artificial flowers—  
A city maid talking love  
To a dainty dandelion.

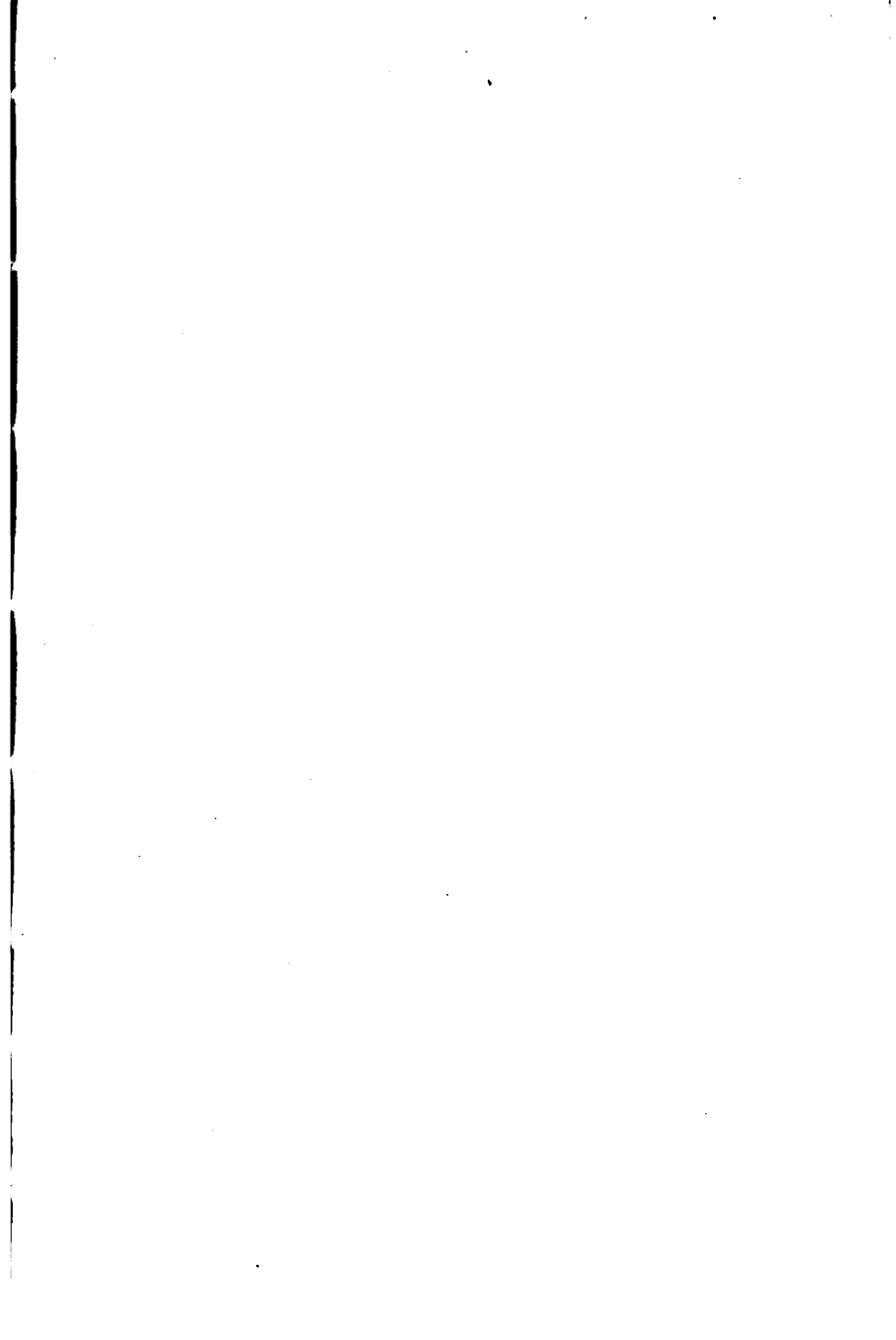


## x The Smiths

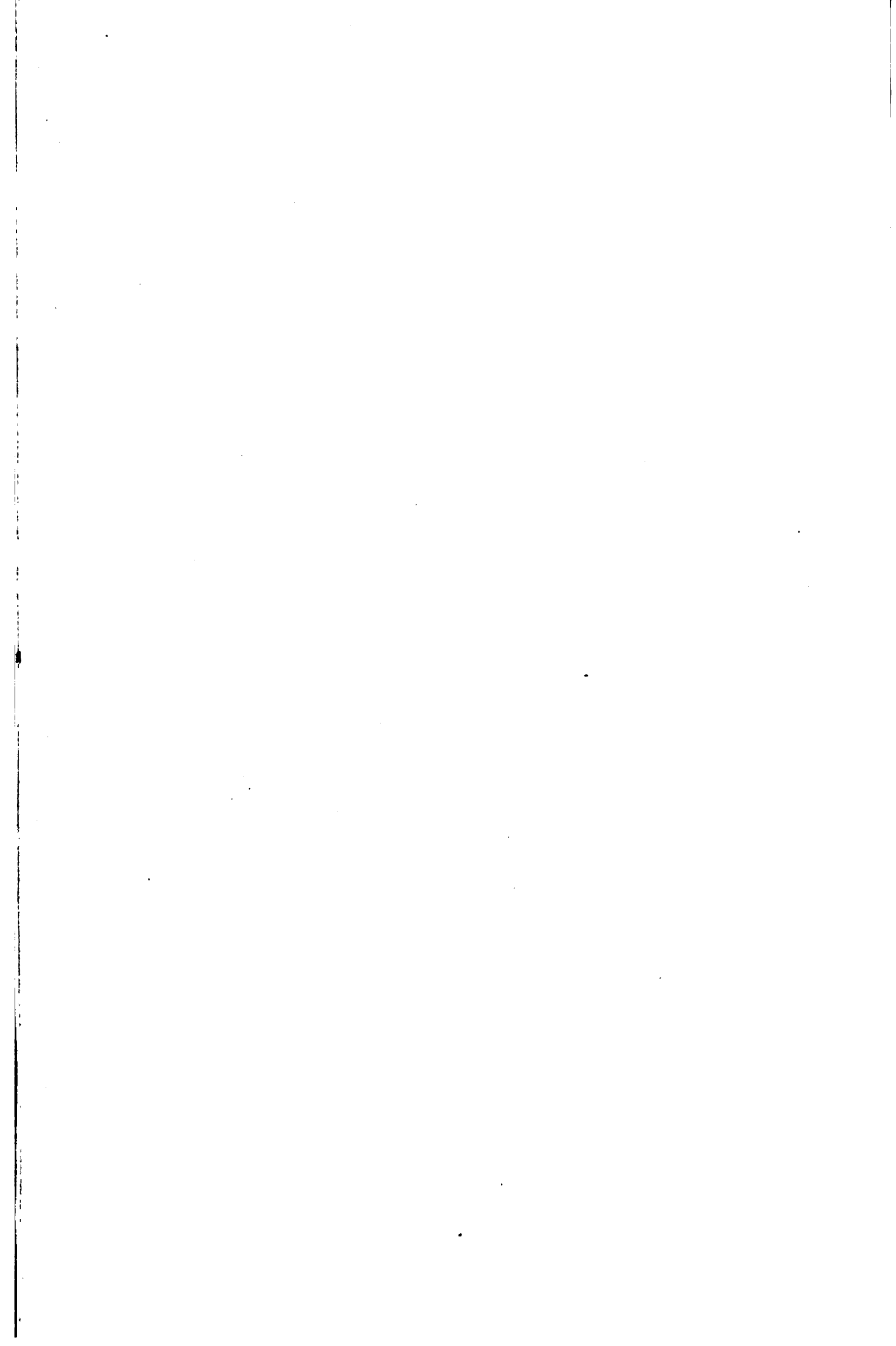
The gas flame seemed to be fanning itself—  
The kitchen was so hot.

Mrs. Smith left the steaming stove  
To cool her moist cheek at the fire-escape window;  
Surprised to see that the sky was still there  
She wondered if there were Smiths on each soft  
star.

Mr. Smith shouted from the dining room:  
"The soup was good, Ann; I'm ready for the  
meat!"









OCT 15 1941

